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7 8	UNITED STAT	ES DISTRICT COURT			
9	NORTHERN DIST	TRICT OF CALIFORNIA			
10	SAN FRAN	ICISCO DIVISION			
11	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,	Case No. CR 17-0387 CRB			
12 13	Plaintiff,	STATEMENT FROM THE MEMBERS OF THE OAKLAND YEMINI			
14	vs. AMER SINAN ALHAGGAGI,	COMMUNITY			
15 16	Defendant.				
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Statement from the Members of the Oakland Yemini Community

Case 3:17-cr-00387-CRB Document 127 Filed 02/25/19 Page 2 of 8 Statement from Members of the Oakland Yemeni Community

February 26, 2019

We, members of the Oakland Yemini community, recognize that Amer said many hateful things on the Internet, met with an undercover agent, and knowingly opened social media accounts for ISIS sympathizers. All of this he has admitted to the court. We deplore and condemn Amer's appalling conduct. We want it to be known that we are a peace-loving community and hold the security and safety of this country as dear as we hold our own personal safety. But we also know-based on our deep connection to him and his family over many years - that he is not a terrorist or a violent person and we believe he will pose no threat to others when released from prison- a conclusion supported by several professionals, including the probation officer, psychologist, and terrorism expert, who have interviewed him. We have seen Amer grow up and we know him to have been a very immature young man with a boundary-pushing streak, but also a good-hearted and generous person. We believe strongly that the experience of this prosecution and his time in solitary in jail has had a very sobering effect on him.

Everyone in the Yemeni community is closely following this case and the sentence that the court gives Amer is one that in some ways will be suffered by the entire community. Amer's mother has been holding food and clothing drives for the homeless for years and recently led efforts to fill two shipping containers with needed supplies to go to the war-torn Yemen. Amer's father runs a summer school program in Oakland for Yemini children and youth. Amer himself has made many charitable contributions to the community—he has fed the homeless, given money to those in need, helped teach children and offered assistance to the elderly.

If we believed that Amer meant any of the things he said, we would join the prosecutor's call for a harsh sentence. But we do not believe this. The community supports Amer and will work hard to help him reintegrate as a law-abiding citizen. Community members have attended every court appearance in great numbers. We do so to demonstrate that we understand both what is at stake in terms of the gravity of the case and also the dangers of over-punishing the foolish behavior of a childish young man. Community members have also absorbed the difficult lessons of the case. We view Amer's behavior as a failure on our part to manage a young and immature member. In response, we are doing the following:

- Establishing an educational trust fund for Amer with an initial deposit of \$10,000 to support his post-release studies. It is clear to us that Amer needs to focus on academics and make a future for himself away from the Internet and a life of petty thievery.
- Organizing a team of community members to visit Amer in prison so as to plan for his life after release – we are developing a program of part-time work opportunities for him with the intention that he attend evening school and continue his studies when released.
- Developing a program in the soon-to-be-opened Yemini community center in Oakland to discuss the case and talk to young men about online activity, about making inappropriate jokes, about hoaxing or pranking, about how people perceive these kinds of things, and what to do if approached by someone making extremist comments online or fomenting violence.

The Oakland Yemeni community believes in the U.S. system of justice and knows the federal court's reputation for fairness. When sentencing Amer, we are hopeful that the court will recognize that his behavior was that of an immature young man who never committed a violent act. We hope that the court will take into account that we as a community have come together to develop a program of rehabilitation for Amer while he is in prison and will fully embrace him when he is released so that he can live a law-abiding and productive life.

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Signatures

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